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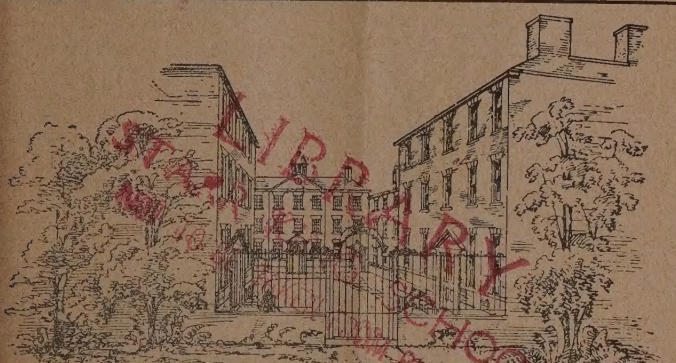
THE UNITARIAN

A MAGAZINE FOR FREE CHRISTIANS



Warrington Academy in 1762

WARRINGTON ACADEMY

A Landmark in Higher Education

Warrington Academy was founded by John Seddon, minister of Cairo Street Chapel, Warrington, in 1757, with the help of many subscribers to his plan for providing up-to-date higher education both for students for the ministry and students for careers in business or the professions. Its bi-centenary was celebrated in Warrington by the civic authorities who gave a dinner at which the present minister of Cairo Street Chapel (Unitarian) was present, the Rev. Eric Wild, B.A., along with the President of the General Assembly and the Rev. H. Lismer Short, M.A., representing Manchester College, Oxford. At Cairo Street Chapel also the bi-centenary was observed with commemorative services.

Warrington Academy was a short-lived experiment. It closed in 1783, only 26 years after its opening. It was, however, a formative experiment which left its mark on education long after it came to an end.

"Nonconformist Academies" were well-known throughout the eighteenth century, and provided education at university level at a time when Oxford and Cambridge were closed to non-members of the Church of England. They were run by nonconformist ministers, in their own houses, and the charge of their students went alongside the service of their chapels. If the minister moved to another charge in another place, his academy moved with him.

Warrington was intended from the first to be a permanent educational institution. The Rev. John Seddon (not to be confused with his contemporary at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, who was no relation)

did not intend to teach in it himself. He was simply secretary to a Board of Trustees who were its governors. The tutors were mostly dissenting ministers, but they were to be full-time teachers, not part-time ministers. Specialist teachers might be appointed, and as French was one of the subjects considered important, a French tutor held office for a time, who may have been the famous revolutionary, Jean Paul Marat. Warrington was the first Academy in which a choice of subjects was allowed, and when Joseph Priestley became a tutor he developed the study of languages and history, and also encouraged art and recreational activities. Tuition was provided in drawing, music, dancing and fencing. Scientific lectures were also provided.

The Academy was intended to be residential, and in time a quadrangular college building was erected, but this involved a considerable debt, which was one of the factors in hastening the end of the experiment. Another factor was the indiscipline of the students, a problem partly explained by the fact that they were largely teenagers, many being enrolled as young as twelve or thirteen. It was lamented that Warrington town had no constabulary to maintain order when students were up to their pranks which might be carried on at night, as on the occasion when some students went round all the public houses changing over the inn signs and planting one in front of the Academy itself.

The deciding factor in the failure of the Academy, however, was the failure of many orthodox dissenting congregations to send students there. Though none of the tutors were yet Unitarian (Priestley became Unitarian at a later date) and considered themselves only moderately liberal "Arians," there was considerable reluctance among orthodox dissenters to send their sons there or take ministers from the Academy, and by 1786 a crisis had arrived.

The Academy was closed, but not without suggestions that Manchester might prove a better spot for such an establishment, especially since Manchester possessed a constabulary! And in fact, in 1786, Manchester Academy was opened with the support of many of the former Warrington subscribers, and with the valuable library from Warrington. The scientific apparatus from Warrington went to Hackney College which also opened in 1786, but came to an end ten years later for much the same reasons that accounted for the closure at Warrington. The Manchester venture, however, continued, and after removal to York, back to Manchester, and thence to London, finally settled down in Oxford as Manchester College in 1893. The Warrington experiment was a beginning that led ultimately to the modern provincial universities which all seek to develop higher education to meet the needs of the modern world, exactly as Priestley and his colleagues at Warrington designed to do in their own day. Warrington is a landmark, though a short-lived venture, in the history of modern education, and it trained many distinguished men who made their mark either in the ministry or in other professions.

MANAGER'S CHANGE OF ADDRESS

All business and advertisement communcations for this magazine should be addressed to: G. Harrison, 2, Walwyn Close, Stretford, Manchester.

NATIVITY CRADLE SONG

Rest contented, little heart,
Mother's love is round you:
Close your eyes, let fear depart,
In slumber sweet she's bound you.

High above a Star is bright,
Cattle low around you,
While the Shepherds and the Kings
Have wandered here and found you.

They have brought their gifts to you,
You, though born so lowly;
Gold and frankincense and myrrh,
As though to one most holy.

Lullaby, O baby dear,
Mother's love enfolds you;
Though they bow the knee to you,
'Tis mother's arm that holds you.

E. CRONIN.

CHRIST OUR BROTHER

By Joyce Hazlehurst

A Welsh Christmas carol, "Nos Galan," contains these words:

Here we know that Christ our brother
Binds us all as by a cord:
He was born of Mary Mother
Where the mountains praise the Lord.

Christ our brother: that idea, found first in the New Testament, is one which has appealed especially to Unitarians, and our sense of brotherhood with Jesus is extended ideally to cover all mankind—"The Brotherhood of Man."

It is not surprising, then, that two Unitarian novelists, Dickens and Louisa Alcott, described Christmas as a time when people find most happiness in helping the poor. Many of us to-day, without conscious philanthropy, have felt the pleasures of our homes heightened by inviting into them some lonely folks. We want to be brotherly at Christmas.

I once heard somebody say that the greatest obstacle in the progress of Christianity to-day is not its incomprehensibility, but its failure in brotherhood. I believe that to be true. International and racial fear and hatred mock brotherhood and make the distance between ideal and practice impossibly far. One of our modern troubles is that we continually hear about evils over which we seem to have no control. We turn with relief to our homes and churches where we can be creative and work out our ideals, if only on a small scale. To quote a responsive reading in "School Praise:" "Let our lives be the pattern for others, until the spirit of this fellowship becomes the spirit of the whole wide earth."

The operative word is "until" and we must never forget it or we shall become escapist. Christ our brother meditated on "until" also, and his meditation became a prayer: "Thy Kingdom Come." Christians have always had to live inside that word "until:" it is the tension which leads to progress. Feeling the tension is not easy, but it is part of the Christmas experience.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

The Lonely Snowman

The snow is falling steadily. A white carpet covers the ground and the trees wear their white robes. Night has descended, and from the blue-black of the heavens gracefully falls the curtain of snowflakes until the bitter north wind arrives to scatter them here and there. On the hillsides can be seen little dots of light—houses and farms, warm family firesides, havens of peace.

The people are indoors enjoying the comfort of their hearths. Nobody is about in the piercing wind and falling snow, as if all had completed their tasks and hurried home to shelter.

But somebody *is* out. The wintry blasts roar round him as he stands there in the garden. The firelight is streaking through the drawn curtains, the happy shrieks of children are heard—at their final play before going to bed. He cannot see the firelight because he is facing the other way and cannot turn round, but he hears the children's voices. Silly, you say? A snowman cannot hear? He is made only of snow?

But he can hear the children's voices; of that I am sure. And he thinks about them too. Let us walk up to him. Here we are. A fine snowman, as tall as we are, a battered bowler on his head, two pieces of coal for eyes and one for his nose, a twig for his mouth, a stick through his arm, an old scarf round his neck. And I am sure he is thinking of the children in that house who made and dressed him.

He is wishing he could go inside and play with them—he *did* enjoy their games to-day. If only the children would say good-night before they go to bed. Listen! "Good-night" to Mummy and Daddy, the happy voices, and then the door is opened swiftly, two tousle-headed dressing-gowned figures appear and wave "Good-night, Mr. Snowman, happy dreams—see you in the morning!"

The door slams, the voices fade away behind other doors. But look at the Snowman's face! Is that a tear, and another? No, of course not; his eyes are pieces of coal! Perhaps a snowflake glistening, perhaps the snow turning to rain, perhaps—but for a moment I was sure I could see them. Do you think I did?

A UNITARIAN CENTENARY

New Gravel Pit Church, Hackney Founded 1665, Present Building 1857

London 300 years ago was vastly different from the London of to-day. It consisted of the "square mile" with a few dwellings outside the "walls." The now prosperous metropolitan boroughs were nothing more than scattered villages.

It was to one of these villages, Hackney, that Dr. William Bates—Bates of the silver tongue—one of the noble Two Thousand ejected ministers, came to minister to a small congregation which had set up a chapel in St. Thomas' Square. Here he remained until his death in 1699. Subsequently the pulpit was filled by the Rev. Robert Billie and the Rev. Matthew Henry, but upon the untimely death of the latter in 1714 disputes among the congregation led to a decision to build a new meeting house, the foundation stone of which was laid in 1715. This new meeting house or chapel was built by the gravel pit in Paradise Fields which gave to the congregation the name it still holds.

Much of the history of the congregation rests for the next century, and it is only in the latter half of the 18th century that much is known. Mr. Smith would appear to have been the first minister in the new building, and he was succeeded by Mr. Mole, Dr. Dawson, Mr. Laugher and Mr. Law, but there are blanks which the historian cannot fill.

In 1770 however, Dr. Richard Price was invited to accept the morning pulpit. Dr. Price was already well-known on account of his treatises on Actuarial Science, and had been elected to a Fellowship of the Royal Society. He remained in charge of the congregation until his death in 1791. Then the congregation invited the now better known and certainly more

abused Dr. Joseph Priestley to the pulpit. Abuse and general hostility, however, proved too strong, and after only three years—in 1794—he was compelled to leave for America.

From the time of Dr. Price's arrival in Hackney, history clears. Whilst Dr. Price was himself Arian in views, Dr. Priestley was more Unitarian. When he left in 1794 the Rev. Thomas Belsham accepted the pulpit at Gravel Pit Chapel but remained only for 11 years and in 1805 took charge of the pulpit at Essex Street. Mr. Belsham was followed by the Rev. Robert Aspland who, however, was not destined to preach for long in the old chapel, for antagonism to the Unitarian faith was still strong, and the lease of the building terminated. In 1808 a new church was built a short distance away and it was to this building the New Gravel Pit Church, that the Rev. Robert Aspland and his congregation moved. In all Mr. Aspland occupied the pulpit in Hackney for 40 years and it is fitting that the present School Hall, built at the beginning of this century, is named after him.

Robert Aspland was followed for very short terms by Dr. Sadler, the Rev. J. Boucher and the Rev. T. Marshall, the latter leaving for Brixton in 1857. In that year the church was found to be so insecure that it was pulled down and the foundation stone of the present building was laid on June 28th, 1857. A few months after it was opened, the Rev. Robert Brook Aspland, eldest son of Robert Aspland, began his ministry which he maintained until his sudden death in 1869. In 1870 the Rev. James Whitehead began a ministry of 21 years. He was followed by the Revs. Fletcher Williams, R. H. U. Bloor, H. Rawlings and B. Lister.

Now we turn to the present. Mr. Lister was followed for varying short periods by the Revs. Roger Thomas, Rosalind Lee, C. H. Bartlett, P. E. Canham (now in the Church of England) and W. H. Cordell.

After the departure of Mr. Cordell the church entered upon what was perhaps the worst phase of its history. The church building, badly damaged during the war, had not been repaired. There was no regular minister and no adequate stipend could be raised. The few supporters who remained had faith. The church has now been repaired, and in this centenary year of the present building the congregation has been fortunate to welcome the Rev. R. E. Goddard as minister. May his ministry be as long and fruitful as many of those in the past.

Salk or not, it comes from monkeys.

WOMEN'S LEAGUE NEWS

Manchester District League

At Rochdale on October 5th 180 members represented 26 branches at the quarterly meeting. Mrs. Barr in her address reminded the members of some of the League rules made when the League was founded, saying that what we do now is just as important as in those early days. Each group must help to strengthen the others. Do we know enough about our own faith to spread our gospel? We must have a properly balanced church by making our religious well-being as important as our social well-being. After tea, Miss

Brown, deputy governor of Strangeways Women's Jail, told of the life of prisoners. Some of the stories were humorous and some pathetic. Everyone agreed that Miss Brown, who has taken the place of Miss Stocker, who is now in charge of the prison without bars, is the right person for this kind of job.

NEWS AND VIEWS

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

The I.A.R.F. News-Digest reports the affiliation of the Society of Friends in Philadelphia, U.S.A., and action taken by the Committee to develop the formation of liberal religious groups in Scandinavia. It contains Dr. H. J. McLachlan's very interesting report of his visit to Czechoslovakia last spring as a guest of the Moravian Church to its quincentenary celebrations, and his renewed contacts while there with the Czechoslovak Church and the Unitarian Churches in Czechoslovakia, with the unveiling of a memorial to Dr. Norbert Capek, who died at Dachau Concentration Camp in 1942, in his native village of Radomysl. It is also reported that the Czechoslovak has bought five war-damaged Jewish synagogues for use as churches.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The autumn meeting of the Council was held at the New Meeting Church, Kidderminster, on October 25th. The President, Rev. J. P. Chalk, reported numerous visits to churches and associations. Advance campaigns at Middleton (Manchester), Brighton, and Glasgow were noted, the last being a very special and intensive campaign. The Rev. John Kielty gave an informative report on his recent visit to the Unitarians in Cologne and Alzey, and religious liberals in Offenbach, which is the oldest free church in Germany Here 32 young men and 39 young women were received at the last confirmation service, and the membership of the church and its local groups is estimated at about 10,000. A similar number of adherents is reported for the fifteen congregations in the German Unitarian Association centred on Frankfort.

The Welcome and Recognition Service was held in the evening, being conducted for the first time by a Lay Preacher, a member of the Assembly Council, Dr. Stanley Kennett, of Liverpool. The new ministers received were the Revs. D. C. Doel (Blackley and Middleton), D. E. J. Davies (Trebanos), B. Findlow (Dudley), L. A. Gribble (Wallasey and Chester), D. R. John, and D. M. Klugel (Ilminster and Yeovil).

THE CHURCHES

BRADFORD. BROADWAY AVENUE church is again producing a Christmas Pageant based on Longfellow's poem "King Robert of Sicily."

DUKINFIELD. The Centenary celebrations have been well supported, and the Bazaar has raised over £1,600. A junior section of the Dramatic Society is being formed.

HYDE. FLOWERY FIELD CHURCH has organised an Advance Campaign and the first of a series of special evening services was conducted in October by the Rev. Dr. Alfred Hall, M.A., with an excellent congregation. The congregation has been challenged to raise £700 at its Christmas Fair. Among improvements planned for the church are communion rails to be hand carved by Mr. Gibbons, of Ashton, the provision of a new organ and hymn books. A monthly youth magazine, *The Good Companion* has been launched, consisting of eight duplicated pages.

MANCHESTER. ALTRINCHAM Evening Women's League celebrated its tenth birthday on October 26th with a social, at which sketches by Mr. and Mrs. Plummer were followed by supper and an absorbing talk by Miss Kathleen Tootill, "An Iceland

Journey," illustrated in colour by slides and cinema films. PENDLETON gave very careful planning to its Christmas Fair in November, making sure that all the products on all stalls were distinctive, no stall selling the same kind of article that would appear on another. RENSHAW STREET MISSION held a Social on October 19th to honour members who have reached the age of 80, who were presented with flowers and a gift. Mrs. M. Jones and Mrs. P. Smith, the recipients, have been loyal members of congregation and Women's League for many years. At SWINTON the recently formed Men's Fellowship is enjoying a series of talks entitled "The Church Looks at Society." They have been given by Mr. Robinson, of the N.S.P.C.C., and Mr. J. Roberts, Director of Civic Welfare for the City of Salford. At the annual Women's League Service in October the preacher was Mrs. Bonner, of Brookfield, Gorton. URMSTON has altered its time of service from morning to afternoon.

NORTH-EAST LANCASHIRE LAY PREACHERS' ASSOCIATION. The 5th annual meeting was held at Preston on October 12th. Rev. W. A. M. Hellaby welcomed the members. The President, Mrs. F. Sisson, installed Mrs. F. Wager (Preston) as the new President, and Mr. G. E. Hilbert (Astley) was appointed Vice-President. It was decided to accept an invitation from Astley to hold the 1958 meeting there, also that full expenses should be paid for all members attending the Manchester Easter School next year. Services (763) have been conducted under the Association's auspices since its formation. After tea a service of Affirmation was held, conducted by Mrs. F. M. Procter (Newchurch), Mrs. F. Wager, Miss A. Hesketh (Horwich), and Miss S. Procter. Mrs. Sisson preached an outstanding sermon.

WESTERN UNION CHURCHES. BRIDPORT Women's League has paid for a lantern over the chapel porch.

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"Times Literary Supplement."

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The Story and Significance of the Unitarian Movement

by W. G. Tarrant, B.A.

Reprinted with additional notes

1/6 by post 1/9

The Lindsey Press, 15, Gordon Square, London, W.C.1.

CHELTENHAM enjoyed a Danish Supper provided by Miss Olive Young, who visited Denmark in the summer. Farewell was said to the Rev. Barbara Thomas after a ministry of 31 years, at the Harvest Supper. At the CULLOMPTON Chapel Flower Show in August, £32 was realised. Members' working parties have modernised the Manse, for the coming of the Rev. J. W. Maw, M.A., whose induction was held in September. GLOUCESTER is installing an electric blower for the organ at a cost of £70. ILMINSTER has started a Youth Club.

UNITARIANS IN THE NEWS

Mrs. Brightwell, of Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, has reached her 90th birthday, and Miss Kate Dornan, of Oldham, her 91st.

Jacqueline Hale, of Hinckley Sunday School, gained a silver proficiency medal for swimming at Blackpool Derby Baths.

Mrs. Moss, of Bath, has been presented with a handbag in appreciation of her long service as organist.

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Long, of Trowbridge, celebrated their golden wedding on September 25th.

The Rev. W. H. Cordell, of Taunton and Bridgwater, is going to Glossop. Mr. Trevor Jones, son of the Rev. T. J. Jones, of Southport, is now Lay Pastor at Stannington and studying for the ministry at U.C.M. The Rev. G. Mabel Beames is on a visit to the Rev. Margaret Barr in the Khasi Hills.

HINCKLEY Great Meeting congregation is raising a special boiler fund.

RAWTENSTALL is celebrating its 200th anniversary. The congregations at ACCRINGTON, BURNLEY, NEWCHURCH, PADIHAM and TODMORDEN were invited to send members to a Bicentenary Social on October 26th. TODMORDEN Women's League weekend was on October 19th and 20th, with a Saturday tea and social, and Sunday evening service conducted by the Rev. Rosamund Barker, B.D.

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